

VZCZCXRO1828  
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHNE #0588 0860819  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 270819Z MAR 09 ZDK  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5919  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7498  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6118  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3230  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6195  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8204  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7763  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 000588

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: FOR LET, IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Lesslie Viguerie for Reasons  
1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (S) Summary: Recent terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is in line with the annual increase in infiltrations during the spring thaw. The upcoming national elections may also be a factor in the increase. At least 17 militants and eight Indian soldiers were killed in a March 20 battle on the Line of Control. Lashkhar-e-Toiba (LeT) claimed responsibility for the attempted infiltration and announced plans to intensify its activities in Kashmir. Senior intelligence officials have confided that they also expect LeT to target political candidates and rallies during the upcoming national election, but shared no specifics on where or when. End Summary.

'Tis the Season  
-----

¶3. (U) Spring is coming to Kashmir, and with it the annual increase in infiltration attempts and skirmishes along the Line of Control. Melting snows and slightly warmer weather have enabled LeT and other groups to resume operations that historically decrease during the winter months. The five-day skirmish that began March 20 has been billed as the biggest infiltration attempt this year by Indian officials. (Kupwara, at 10,273 feet, is currently still covered by snow and ice, but has recently become traversable.) Army officials have said they found this group of militants to be exceptionally well-trained and outfitted. There had been at least three smaller infiltration attempts earlier this month in other areas. The Army Chief has been quoted as saying he believes 300 militants are waiting to infiltrate from 40-50 terror camps across the Line of Control, now that the thaw has started.

Perhaps Compounded by Upcoming Elections  
-----

¶2. (S) LeT may be even more intent on activity in Kashmir to end the relative calm that has prevailed since the state elections last November. The upcoming national elections, which will run from April 16 to May 13, no doubt offer another tempting target period to stir the pot. In a meeting with FBI Director Mueller in early March, Intelligence Bureau Director Rajiv Mathu, Home Minister Chidambaram, and National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan all said they had credible intelligence to suggest LeT would attack politicians during the upcoming elections. They did not specify whether they

had intelligence about specific events or candidates, but the press has reported heightened security is planned for major figures such as Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister.

Comment

-----

¶4. (C) Indian security officials are compelled to highlight the strength and sophistication of its nemesis, just as LeT is compelled to make the point that it has not forgotten Kashmir even while it is active elsewhere. LeT needs to "deliver" to advance its recruitment and financing efforts. The next few months will likely see an increase in incidents on the Line of Control and in the Valley itself as some infiltrators make it through. Indian security officials believe they can absorb the sporadic and scattered small-scale encounters with the terrorist in Kashmir. Their big worry is that the LeT manages to pull off some spectacular incident within Kashmir to reassert its relevance in the state after several years of steadily improving security situation.

WHITE